

## THE FINAL CLEW

By Augustus Goodrich Sherwin.

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John Martin, mortgage banker, shrewd and careful man of business, sat facing his bookkeeper, Ralph Terhune, a pleasing, clear-minded young man, in the estimation of Eunice Martin at least, although the money-absorbed father knew nothing of that.

The two men were seated in the private office of the banker. This had an anteroom and both apart-



In the Anteroom Was a Lurking Figure.

ments connected with the residence of John Martin. In the anteroom was a lurking figure. Its owner had approached the glass door connecting the rooms. He listened first, then he peered cautiously where a small piece of the clouded glass was out of place.

This man was Burton Beale, a bachelor cousin of the banker, who had been the guest of his relative for a month.

"You understand, Terhune," the banker was speaking within the private office.

"Perfectly, Mr. Martin," replied the young office man in his usual attentive and pleasant way.

"I have never trusted any employee as I am trusting you. It is necessary that I should, for some important transactions will have to be handled by you during my absence."

"You will not be gone long, I presume?"

"Perhaps a week. Lean a little closer, Terhune. The combination of the safe is 12-105-19."

Ralph Terhune nodded comprehendingly. While the banker spoke he had carelessly scribbled the numerals on a slip of scrap paper. Instantly his employer drew the tell-tale slip from his hand.

"No, no," he spoke, tearing the bit of paper to pieces. "Never trust such business as that to a record that may accidentally fall under strange eyes. Memorize it."

"To aid me, I will make a temporary notation, then," said Terhune, and he drew up his coat sleeve and marked the numbers on the white surface of his shirt cuff.

The modest but pretty cuff button holding it together met his glance as he did this, and his eye brightened. Those buttons were a birthday gift from Eunice, a week ago. A memory of her charming face coupled with the great confidence her father reposed in him made the heart of the young man thrill with cheer and hope.

When the banker and Ralph passed through the anteroom, Beale was not there. He had hurried from the apartment, trembling all over with excitement. He had heard and seen that which to his mind was as a plank of safety thrust suddenly before a drowning man.

"A way out of all my troubles!" he breathed, as he reached the street. "Let me think."

He drew a letter from his pocket.